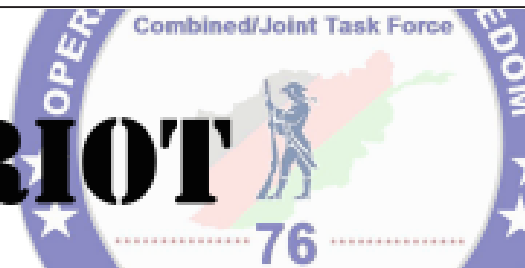




THE PATRIOT



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Afghan crash site to become training area

Story and photos by
Sgt. Adrian Schulte
CJTF-76 Public Affairs

On Feb. 3, a Kam Air passenger jet was waved off from its final approach into Kabul International Airport due to heavy snow fall. Minutes later, the airplane lost communication and crashed into the top of a mountain on the outskirts of Kabul killing all 104 aboard.

On June 19, two CH-47 Chinook helicopters, carrying troops and civil-

ians from Combined Joint Task Force 76 approached the same mountain, known as Hill 3070. The Chinook rested its tail atop the mountain and the troops clambered off amongst a rugged peak 9,600 feet high littered with airplane debris, jackets, shoes and other reminders of the 104 people who perished on the mountain top.

This was not a normal mission for the troops inserted on the hilltop, nor for the pilots and crews that put them there but that was



Service members from Combined Joint Task Force 76 wait for a CH-47 to extract them from the top of Hill 3070 outside of Kabul after checking out a future training area June 19.

kind of the point.

The initial crew that went up the mountain shortly after the crash to recover bodies and the

airplane's black boxes, was made up of United Nations representatives, Afghan National Army troops and a handful of

Coalition forces according to Marine Lt. Col. Larry Stewart, contingency plan-

See CRASH Page 4

Blue Star helicopter crew battles enemy

By Sgt. 1st Class Rick Scavetta
CJTF-76 Public Affairs Office

BAGRAM – When Spc. Ryan Pummill unleashed machinegun fire on enemy insurgents below his UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter, the 22-year-old crew chief knew that wounded troops from a U.S. Army Special Forces team on the ground were counting on him.

An armor piercing round shot into the helicopter's side had just sent hot shrapnel into Pummill's face. Another round impacted under his seat. Bullets were hitting all over the place and smoke was filling the cabin. Still, the Missouri-native kept firing at the enemy.

"I'm seeing our guys on the ground, the enemy was trying to overrun them," Pummill said. "It was our job to suppress the enemy, keep the enemy down and kill who we could kill."

That Monday, April 11, will

be a day that the brave crew from Company A, 3rd Battalion 158th Aviation Regiment, will never forget. On that day, the "Blue Stars" crew risked their lives to protect fellow soldiers and killed half a dozen enemy fighters.

Just behind Pummill, fellow crew chief Spc. John Irick was reloading his M60-D machine gun and waiting for his turn to fire upon the attackers. The pilots up front, Chief Warrant Officers Steven Burr and Chris Palumbo, powered the helicopter through evasive maneuvers to avoid enemy rocket-propelled grenades and machine gun fire.

"We never went without a gun shooting," Pummill said. "While I was firing Spc. Irick was reloading ammo. We'd spin the aircraft and then he was firing."

Less than an hour before, the crew was nearby at Forward Operating Salerno, when a mission came down to insert a quick reaction force into an area where en-

emy had launched an ambush on coalition forces.

Burr, 30, of Lawton, Okla., climbed aboard aircraft 655 along with Palumbo, 32, of West Warrick, RI. A blue star is painted on the nose of the helicopter, a symbol that first saw combat during the seven years the unit served in Vietnam.

Irick and Pummill readied their machine guns and the Black Hawk lifted off. They stopped at a nearby base camp to pick up the quick reaction force, a special forces A-team. AH-64 Apaches had launched earlier and were already at the ambush site.

The rugged terrain and numerous trees made landing difficult, Burr said. They finally found a steep slope to drop off the team.

"The concern was that a guy with the [rocket propelled grenades] would try to launch them at us," Burr said.

Palumbo could only set his right forward landing gear on the

ground. But that was enough. The team had about a four-foot drop to the rocky hillside. They jumped out both sides. The helicopter's rotors barely cleared hitting the slope.

Palumbo lifted the Black Hawk back into the air, taking up an orbit just south of the landing zone. Within seconds, the A-team radioed that they were under fire and shooting back at the enemy.

The Apaches began firing rockets and machine guns to support the troops on the ground. The Apaches were taking fire and getting low on fuel. They had to return to base leaving the UH-60s to help out.

Palumbo called over the radio to the troops on the ground that they would take up close air support. An Air Force A-10 was also overhead to provide cover.

The A-team called up to the helicopter that they were in direct

See CREW Page 4

Coalition Voices / Opinion

Up Front & Centered



Get out of the rat race and manage by values

By Master Sgt. Geoffrey Carter

TF Devil, PAO

Every one of us has, at one time or another, worked with or for someone that was only fixated on achievement. That person was stuck in a rat race and probably wasn't a very happy person either. They would say or do anything to make them self look better or achieve a certain goal.

That rat would probably tell the boss when someone was late to work so they would appear more loyal to the company. They might even be your boss. You know the one who takes everyone's ideas and presents

them as their own with out giving the originator the proper credit.

Ken Blanchard, one of my favorite business sense authors, has co-authored a book called "Managing by Values" along with Michael O'Connor, and it explains a process for improving work environments.

That process is called Managing by Values (MBV) and has three phases: gaining clarity, communicating effectively, and aligning practices.

If you don't know where you're going how do you know when you get there? Blanchard believes that the most important thing in life is to decide what is important. That means you need to get clarity if you want to manage by values.

Phase I, Gaining Clarity: In the sports world athletes talk about being in the 'zone' which is the same concept as clarity. The harder they try to win, the less

likely they are to find their zone. In business many companies or individuals watch only their scoreboard (the bottom line). By making this their focus they take their eyes off the ball (their relationships with people). To be successful in business or life you need to keep both eyes fixed on the values you want to live and work by. That may not place the bottom line first.

Phase II, Communicating Effectively: Blanchard says, "Genuine success does not come from proclaiming our values but from consistently putting them into daily action." In other words you've got to 'walk the talk'. Some of that talk is nonverbal communication like 'symbols of inequality' such as executive parking spaces or executive washrooms. One step management can take to alleviate the feeling of inequality would be to refer to everyone in the organization as an 'associate' rather than

by formal titles.

"Real change doesn't happen until it happens inside people. It's a change not in what people see but what people see with", according to Blanchard, "communication isn't based on agreement but on understanding."

Phase III, Aligning Practices: This third phase contends that being a company or individual whose values are aligned does not occur without changes in habits, practices, and attitudes. This phase is perhaps the hardest one because it requires people to take a hard look within them self. How do you think people see you? Just imagine that your colleagues gave you a nickname like "the angry little man." I would say that some readjustment to your attitude might be in order.

Just remember that with out values we are nothing. Organizations don't make managing by values work, people do.



By Chaplain (COL) Charles Bailey

CJTF-76 Command Chaplain, Bagram

Chaplain's Corner

Choosing Your Rut

A good friend sent me some information about a country I long to visit, Australia. Outside of Perth, Australia one meanders south to the more rugged regions of the outback for hundreds of miles on clay packed roads raising clouds of dust that blots out the hot sun. During the rainy season large Lories (trucks by any other name) pass along the route tearing up the clay and making deep tire tracks that are well over wheel well in depth. Then one day the rains stop, the sun comes out and bakes the tracks hard as if they were paved. You will see a sign that reads, "Choose your rut carefully you'll be in it for a long time."

Ah, I can tell by the way you're lips are moving while reading that you already know where I am going with this. Being stuck in a rut while driving or bicycling is bad enough but when other aspects of your life can also qualify, that is even worse. Ruts come in all sizes and colors. They are know-

ingly and unknowingly imbedded in our ways of thinking. We think and judge about people and things readily because the rut fits easily. We behave out of habit certain ways because the rut is deep and restrictive. Ruts in our lives are predictable and comfortable. We don't have to think; just react.

But where does the hurt come to the surface? As been said, we judge too quickly; we respond too quickly; and we make critical decisions too quickly. Ruts, like in Australia, tell us where to go by the restrictive shape worn into our relationships such as

"Choose your rut carefully, you'll be in it for a long time."

- Australian sign

parents, spouse and friend over time. The biggest loss is to our spiritual journey that we set into motion according to our agenda verses the Creator. Our imagination and creativity dry up due to lack of usage. New opportunities bypass us due to our blindness of the different.

Do a quick check on the ruts in your life. Are the important things in your life the same old thing for so long? If you are happy with who and what you are and do, then keep moving forward. If not, then like the sign said, "Choose your rut carefully, you'll be in it for a long time."

Anthrax vaccine back, coming to a clinic near you soon

The Department of Defense announced a resumption of its Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program (AVIP). Based on the implementing memorandum signed April 29, military commanders may resume the vaccination program upon authorization by their service. The Anthrax Vaccine will be offered to Coalition forces in Afghanistan to protect them against its use as a weapon.

The implementing program required commanders to follow Emergency Use of Anthrax (EUA) conditions very carefully, providing members of the armed services both education on the program and an option to refuse the vaccination without penalty.

Dr. William Winkenwerder, assistant secretary of defense for health affairs, said this directive "is a significant step that allows the department to resume this vital protection measure for military personnel, who are at increased risk of exposure to an anthrax attack. We are pleased to be able to again protect our personnel against anthrax."

Once vaccinations begin, Combined Joint Task Force-76 will provide an education and information program, including an FDA-approval brochure, to inform potential vaccine recipients and healthcare providers about the emergency use of anthrax vaccine to prevent inhalation anthrax. Personnel will also be informed about the vaccine's benefits and side effects before they are asked to decide about vaccination.

The EUA requires that service members be informed of the following points:

- You may refuse anthrax vaccinations under the EUA, and you will not be punished. No disciplinary action or adverse personnel action will be taken if you refuse vaccination. You will not be processed for separation, and you will still be deployable. There will be no penalty or loss of entitlement.

- Refusing anthrax vaccines would make you more vulnerable to lethal anthrax infection. Your loss could endanger other people in your unit who depend on you, and could endanger your mission. Your health and safety are our number one concern. The threat from anthrax spores is deadly and real. Vaccination protects you, your unit, and your mission.

Anthrax is a deadly infection, and anthrax vaccine is an important force protection measure. In the fall of 2001, 22 cases of anthrax resulted from attacks with anthrax spores. Five people died in these attacks.



Across Afghanistan / CJTF - 76

Graduations broadcasted to deployed parents

Story and photo by
Sgt. Tara Teel
CJTF-76 Public Affairs

High school graduation is a landmark for both teens and parents. Many Soldiers thought they would be left out this year.

Sgt. Shawn Casey completely dismissed any idea of seeing his daughter Talisa graduate after he found out he was going to be deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom with the 69th Transportation Company.

Fortunately, to his surprise, European military community high school graduations were broadcasted live for the benefit of deployed parents in Afghanistan, Iraq and other locations, 9-13 June.

"It was something I never imagined," said Casey, who lives in Manheim, Germany. "It is a dream come true. It made my day that I was able to see her and tell her how proud I am."

A coordinated effort between the Combined Joint Task Force-76 communications and personnel sections took place in order to ensure everyone who had a child graduating was notified and had the opportunity to attend the ceremony. However, because the Soldiers with CJTF-76 are with units anywhere from Hawaii to Alaska, and North Carolina to Italy, the level of difficulty increased drastically.

This is the first time that United States Army Europe (USAREUR) Command provided Soldiers deployed to both Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as a few other various locations, with live broadcasts and video teleconferences. In prior years, USAREUR broadcasted live graduation ceremonies to Soldiers deployed only to Iraq.

"This year's broadcast went more smoothly than the one I watched from Iraq last year," said Col. William Mayville, CJTF-76 Chief of Staff, who watched his second son graduate from Vicenza High School in the Teatro Olimpico, Vicenza, Italy, from Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan.

Approximately 25 parents were able to witness one of the greatest milestones in their child's life from three different locations in Afghanistan. Video teleconferences of about nine European military high schools were broadcasted at Bagram Airfield, Kandahar Airfield and Forward Operating Base Orgun-E, in the Paktika province.

"It was a huge undertaking," said Lt. Col. Richard Price, CJTF-76 Communications Officer. "It was a combination between commercial and tactical systems used together to allow the viewer to watch from a desktop and then have a video teleconference one-on-one with their child."

Gen. B.B. Bell,
USAREUR Commanding General,



Sgt. Shawn Casey, 69th Transportation Company, watches his daughter, Talisa Anderson, graduate from high school in Manheim, Germany, June 13 while he is deployed to Bagram, Afghanistan.

and staff in USAREUR conducted weekly meetings to ensure the process was going smoothly and work out the 'what-ifs'.

"It has been very reliable," said Maj. Sam Williams, Director of Joint Communication Control Center. "Everyone who attended a ceremony was extremely happy."

"All of the Soldiers appreciated the opportunity and tremendous effort from the commanders on all of the levels in Afghanistan and in Europe," Price said. "This mission was important for morale. It gave me great satisfaction to be able to apply the technology to support this mission and the family back home."



Ambassador farewells Afghanistan

Zalmay Khalilzad, the outgoing U.S. Ambassador of Afghanistan, gives his farewell speech to the troops of Camp Eggers and Maj. Gen. Peter Gilchrist, deputy commanding general of Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan. He has been the ambassador since Nov. 24th 2003 but will now be taking the same position in Iraq. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Daisy Bueno, Kabul CPIC)

THE PATRIOT

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The editor reserves the right to edit all submissions for style, brevity and clarity.

Photos from the Field

Photos courtesy of Task Force Storm

Take pictures within your units. Look for unique shots that show your unit's mission and E-mail them to: cjtf76.pao.photos@cjtf76.centcom.mil Include Name, Rank, Unit, Job Description and hometown of photographer. Also, provide in the caption - the date, location, unit mission and identify any troops.



Across Afghanistan / CJTF - 76

Hill 3070 to be new training ground

CRASH from Page 1



Sgt. Sergio Rojas, a medic from headquarters and headquarters company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, Combined Joint Task Force 76, finds a route down the side of Hill 3070 June 19.

ner for CJTF-76.

Since then, it was decided that the area would serve as a good training area for future incidents in similar conditions.

"We are trying to establish a high-altitude, high-angle rescue and recovery capability that serves as a force multiplier in [Afghanistan]," said Stewart. "We are using a crawl, walk, run approach."

The CJTF-76 crew that went up there June 19 initially did an aerial reconnaissance of site the first week of June. Then June 10, they inserted a small team to further check out the site for future training missions, clear the area of explosives and potentially re-

cover remains.

The trip June 19 was similar only with a slightly larger group with a more robust capability.

This is the crawl stage of the plan as the team is working to get as a group and make sure the area is safe to operate in. On this mission,

the team got a better look at an area dubbed the "boomerang trail," to make sure the path was clear of mines and to set up an area to use as a collection point for casualties.

These are not the first visitors to Hill 3070. The mountain top has some mines and exploded and unexploded ordnance. The mountain sits in a strategic location outside of Kabul, giving those on top of it an excellent view on those below. How the mines got up there is guesswork.

"It's speculation whose mines they were," said Stewart.

Some say the Soviets scattered mines from aircraft across the mountain-top to deny access to

the hill to the mujahadeen fighters of the day. Others say the mines were laid by somebody else. Whoever laid them, they now pose an obstacle for others who want to use the mountain, such as the Coalition troops. To counter this threat, members from the Task Force's explosive ordnance disposal team were sent along to detect and remove any mine threat. On this particular trip, a suspected mine was expended by the team.

Along with training a ground team, the mission also served to give the CJTF-76 Task Force Griffin Chinook pilots a chance to train in high altitude operations.

"We wanted to ensure that the aviators got some practice at high altitudes and make sure they were comfortable with the landing zones," said Stewart. "The end state is to be able to go up higher than 10,000 feet where we have to start breathing on oxygen and be able to do rescue and recoveries up to 18,000 feet. This ties the aviators in as well because every time they fly above 10,000 feet, they have to go on oxygen. So not only does it give us an opportunity to get up on the mountain and do training, but it gives them the opportunity, when they drop us off, to go up there and do some high-altitude breathing and high altitude, challenging landing in unconven-

tional landing zones."

In the future, the ground team hopes to continue their training at greater and greater increments of altitude, culminating in a two to three-day trip on Hill 3070. They also hope to get Army Mountain Warfare School troops to join them on the mountain for rope operations training.

Also in the future, the team will integrate Norwegian forces into the operations with the ultimate end state to hand the site and capabilities off to private contractors. The training will continue through the rest of the summer months.

"We are trying to get base camp capabilities set within the team so that in some type of mishap above 10,000 feet, we will set up a base camp and let the high altitude extend the recovery reach higher and have the base camp to use as a staging and re-equipping area," said Stewart. "Some time in August, when the weather clears up, we will try to go up to 15,000 feet and execute our training lessons learned in an actual recovery operation."

The mission not only tested the high-altitude team's capabilities, it also helped to clear the area of mines. It set the stage to bring a lot of moving pieces together under one operation.

Mission turns into battle for survival

CREW from Page 1

contact with the enemy, who were hiding in trees down the ridge from their position.

"We saw one [enemy] begin to run down the ridge and the team chased after him," Burr said. "The guy fell off the ridge and into a draw."

Burr's helicopter flew around the steep slope to search for the criminals. Burr spotted the enemy fighter and talked Irick onto the target. The 23-year-old crew chief from Seminole, Okla., let loose with his M-60 machine gun killing the man.

When Irick needed to reload, the pilots swung the aircraft around to allow Pummill to fire.

"We continued to circle when we started to take small arms fire and an RPG was launched at us," Burr said.

Then a call came over the radio – two A-team members were wounded and badly needed a lift out.

"When you hear the despera-

tion in that voice on the radio, someone saying that they need you there, you kind of feel helpless," Palumbo said. "You could see the bad guys. I wasn't going to leave our guys bleeding on the side of the hill."

They circled around trying to find the wounded Soldiers when they saw a half-dozen insurgents closing in. At one point the enemy ran underneath the helicopter to attack the wounded Soldiers, who had taken cover. The pilots lowered the helicopter to about 20 feet off the ground.

"We positioned the aircraft between the enemy and the wounded soldiers and began to engage," Burr said.

During the next 10 minutes, Pummill and Irick took turns with their machine guns, killing roughly six enemy. The crew were shouting so loud they really did not need their internal communication system.

But the enemy had opened fire on the helicopter. They fired

at least two RPGs at the Black Hawk, forcing the pilots to throw the helicopter into skill-testing positions. Bullets ricocheted around the cabin.

The enemy shot several holes in the fuel tank, an engine and the rotors. Smoke was billowing out and sparks flew from the cockpit.

"We knew we had been shot, but we did not know how bad we'd been shot," Palumbo said.

Pummill was leaning out over his M60-D machine gun when an armor piercing round penetrated a panel just below him, sending shrapnel into his face. Another round shot through the belly of the aircraft, ricocheted off backpacks and grazed his buttocks.

"It felt like someone throwing a rock at you, it stung, but never broke the skin." Pummill said of the round that hit under his seat. "I was in the middle of firing. So, I called to the pilot, 'I'm still good to go' and kept on firing."

The helicopter crew's covering fire allowed the Special Forces team medic to get down to the wounded Soldiers. They were later extracted.

Meanwhile, Palumbo felt the aircraft was "starting to act funny," he said. They decided to fly back to FOB Salerno to have Pummill checked by the medics.

Later the Green Berets told the crew that their actions kept the two wounded Soldiers from being killed. Now, the crew has been put in for medals for their heroic actions.

But decorations did not motivate the Blue Stars crew. Medals are an afterthought for the Soldiers, who still continue their dangerous mission carrying troops and supplies around the battlefield.

"Medals may look good on a uniform, but when you're out there – that's the last thing on your mind," Palumbo said. "We're just one of the many aircrews out there doing our job."

Across Afghanistan / CJTF - 76

Soldiers hone survival, performance skills

Mountain Warfare School instructors train Soldiers in Afghanistan

By Sgt. Tara Teel
CJTF-76 Public Affairs

"The cold weather training is the weakest part of the Army and therefore the most useful thing we teach. Soldiers don't understand the effects of altitude and cold weather on themselves or their equipment." But that is about to change.

Instructors with the Army Mountain Warfare School deployed to Afghanistan for the first time to share their knowledge and expertise in mountaineering and survival in the elements at Forward Operating Bases around the country.

Teaching Soldiers that snow can actually stop bullets, that curves of the land, such as a cliff, can be a benefit to recovery operations rather than a menace, and that all tools have more than one use is all in a days work for the instructors of the Army Mountain Warfare School.

More than 200 U.S. Soldiers in country have been trained since February for dressing in cold weather and its effects on equip-



(Clockwise) Soldiers starting with the basics of knot tying. 3-116th Soldiers shoot in the winter in Ghazni. A 503rd Soldier goes down into a well. (Photos by Staff Sgt. Larry Garner, Army Mountain Warfare School instructor)

ment, mountaineering and survival skills, recovering caches from wells and caves, patient evacuation, and stream crossings.

"One of the main focuses in the course is how to live and survive in cold weather seeing how harsh the winters get in some places in Afghanistan," said Staff Sgt. Larry Garner, an instructor since 1994 from N.C. "We teach them how to use the snow to their advantage, as leverage in evacuating a casualty or anchor points for repelling."

Not only infantry Soldiers go through the training. They train explosive ordnance personnel with emphasis on cache recovery operations and techniques. Ranging from medics and cooks to front line Soldiers



and even mechanics, the instruction starts everyone with the basics – knot tying. Knowing how to tie knots and understand what they are used for is the basic necessity for any operation using ropes, said Staff Sgt. Christopher Bushway, AMWS instructor since 1991 from Maine.

The 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment (Airborne) have run into a few obstacles during prior missions, such as crossing streams safely. If the Soldiers were in the States, they would learn to use trees to assist them in crossing. But in Afghanistan trees are few, so the 1-503rd was taught how to use rocks and other equipment to their advantage for crossing, explained Garner.

"We go to the units and ask them about their concerns, their missions and the difficulties they have with the environment elements they go up against," said Bushway. "Then we take what they are concerned about and teach them how to perform the tasks better and safer."

The instruction was worked around the high tempo training schedule of the units, so Garner and Bushway maximized what the Soldiers learned into intensive instructional sessions focusing on the units' mission and needs. The longest training period with a unit was seven days with a combination of the 3rd Battalion 116th Infantry Regiment and the 25th Infantry Division at Bagram Airfield, whereas back at the Vermont schoolhouse courses are two weeks long.

"The Soldiers don't have a lot of gear on hand," explained Garner. "We teach them that every tool they have has more than one use, how to be more effective with what they do have, and how to do it safely."

Although Garner and Bushway have headed home, come September five other instructors will be deploying to continue training and giving Soldiers confidence needed in a combat zone to survive if they ever found themselves in a harsh environment or situation with limited equipment.

(Clockwise from left) A Soldier learns to repel down a cliff in Qalat. 3-116th Infantry Regiment Soldiers evacuating a casualty in the snowy Ghazni province. 503rd Infantry Regiment (Airborne) Soldiers practicing a Prusika ascent in Qalat. (Photos by Staff Sgt. Larry Garner, Army Mountain Warfare School instructor)

Regional Command East / Task Force Devil

Afghans trapped by flood waters lifted to safety



Afghan National Army and Coalition soldiers help Afghans escape a flood in Methar Lam caused by a dam breaking June 23. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Ken Denny, 117th MPAD)

BAGRAM AIRFIELD – The Afghan National Army and local government officials coordinated efforts with Coalition forces to rescue 119 Afghans stranded on a small island by floodwaters.

The stranded individuals were lifted to safety by a Coalition helicopter June 23 as waters rose on the Indus River near Methar Lam in the Laghman province. A dam upstream gave way sending water downstream trapping the group.

Afghan National Army soldiers on the island coordinated the aircraft loading and were dispensing aid supplies to the victims at a safer area approximately 300 meters away.

The Laghman province deputy governor, working in conjunction with aid agencies, coordinated the rescue effort with Coalition forces.

Aid agencies are working with local officials in the area to ensure that Afghans displaced have access to shelter, medical attention and food.

"This is a perfect example of the Afghan government, taking the lead, working with Afghan National Army and Coalition forces to save lives," said Lt. Col. Jerry O'Hara Combined Joint Task Force-76 spokesman. "We are continuing to work with the government of Afghanistan to ensure the people displaced by this tragic disaster receive the aid they need."

A Provincial Reconstruction Team at Methar Lam is working closely with aid agencies and local Afghan leaders to assist in relief efforts.

Signal Soldiers keep Salerno connected

Story and photo by
Sgt. Chuck Meseke
Task Force Devil Public
Affairs



Spc. Israel Hernandez, a "cable dog" with the 44th Signal Battalion and Bakersfield, Calif., native, runs communications lines into a building at Forward Operating Base Salerno.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO-Forward Operating Base Salerno is a hub of information. It is the operating headquarters for Combined Task Force Devil, Task Force White Devil, Logistics Task Force 307, and other units who base their operations out of the FOB that sits near the Afghan-Pakistani border, which is one of the busiest regions in the war on terror.

Every time a tower guard makes a radio check, a unit in the field calls for artillery or close air support and someone sends an email back home to a loved one, it is made possible by the Soldiers of the 44th Signal Battalion and CTF Devil signal section who maintain the communications equipment used by the task force.

With nearly 3,000 Soldiers operating out of FOB Salerno, keeping the base connected is like managing the communications systems of a small town, said 1st Lt. Ashok "Siv" Sivakumar, a Lawrenceville, N.J., native and help desk officer in charge for the 44th. The 44th operates and maintains the secret and unclassified computer networks as well as the phone lines used on FOB Salerno.

"We probably have 20 kilometers of (communications) lines running throughout the FOB," Sivakumar added.

"The biggest challenge for us is making the base run like Bagram with a staff sized for a smaller forward operating base," Sivakumar said.

One Soldier who depends on the FOB's communications systems for every aspect of his job is Sgt. Armando Rodriguez, a Gibsonburg, Ohio, native and operations noncommissioned officer with CTF Devil headquarters.

Rodriguez's job is to know the locations of all the units operating in Regional Command East and inform the command and units in the field if there are friendly troops near each other.

As an infantryman he has seen first hand how important good communications are in every aspect of the chain of command; from the troops in the field to the headquarters staff.

"As an infantryman, our ability to communicate on the battlefield is one of our biggest advantages over the enemy," Rodriguez said.

With state of the art technology creating a near seamless ability to communicate on the battlefield, troops in the signal business haven't lost sight of the most important asset of the task force, the individual Soldier.

"Knowledgeable operators are the most valuable tool (in the task force)," said Sgt. Paul Allen, a Beaverton, Ore., native and tactical satellite radio operator with CTF Devil Headquarters.

From sandbox to sandbox Chance meeting rekindles 35-year-old friendship

Story by Sgt. Adrian Schulte
CJTF-76 Public Affairs

"Where are you from?"

It's a common question asked and answered by countless service members every day around the world. For two troops, however, the answer would take them down a memory lane 35 years long.

Both decided to serve their country, one in the Air Force, one

in the Marine Corps. After joining, they both became aviators flying helicopters for their respective services. They both have risen to the ranks of lieutenant colonel and have both found themselves serving in the far off land of Afghanistan. And they were classmates together... at East Brady Elementary

See UNITE Page 9

508th Finance Battalion finds safer home



Brig. Gen. Jack Sterling, Combined Joint Task Force 76 Deputy Commanding General, helps Lt. Col. Kathryn Hall, 508th Finance Battalion commander, cut the ribbon signifying the grand opening of the new finance disbursing office at Bagram Airfield June 24. The new office houses a safe and four counters to offer better customer service. (Photo by Sgt. Tara Teel, CJTF-76 Public Affairs)

Regional Command East / Task Force Devil

Infantry course provides Soldiers with realistic training

By Capt. Mirtha Villarreal
Task Force Phoenix
Public Affairs

KABUL – When they deployed to Afghanistan as part of Coalition Joint Task Force Phoenix's Training Assistance Group to train and mentor the Afghan National Army, two infantry instructors from the California National Guard's 223rd Infantry Regiment never imagined they would be training American Soldiers.

But, when Master Sgt. James O'Connor and Sgt. 1st Class James Moffat learned that an infantry military occupation skills qualification course would be offered to troops from their task force, they immediately volunteered to instruct.

O'Connor and Moffat have instructed the infantry course for their California unit for the past six years, but this was the first time since World War II that an infantry MOSQ course would be carried out in a combat zone.

Conducting the course in a combat zone created many challenges.

"In the States, if we (the instructors) need anything for the course, we just jump in a vehicle and drive to the supply room or the headquarters and get it. Here we have an en-

tirely different scenario," said Moffat.

Other unique challenges included the constant possibility of improvised explosive devices on the roads, civilians on the training ranges, the use of live ammunition at all times and maintaining appropriate force protection levels.

One unforeseen training challenge involved the use of Individual Body Armor. IBA is issued to all deployed Soldiers, but the equipment is not readily available in U.S. training environments. Here, every Soldier had to wear the IBA due to force protection requirements. Simple tasks such as donning a rucksack and maneuvering became much more difficult. The extra weight of the IBA,

which is about 25 pounds, added stress and fatigue and also compounded the risk of heat casualties.

Training in a combat zone, however, provided the instructors with valuable advantages.

"We can simulate many scenarios in a schoolhouse environment, but knowing that the possibility exists that someone out there might try to harm you, that gunfire can reach your patrol base, puts a very real sense of urgency and importance to each of the tasks taught," O'Connor said. "Even after the long days, you really didn't have to worry about the guys falling asleep while on perimeter watch."

The students also traveled by tactical convoy to and from their training. This was not part of the course's program of instruction, but a necessity due to enemy threat conditions.

While the Soldiers might have initially expected a classroom-based course, O'Connor and Moffat believe they ben-

efited from the realistic training environment.

Not only did they get an opportunity to train in the weather conditions, terrain and with the civilian population of today's battlefield, they received the added benefit of training with weapon systems not available to students in the U.S.

"The students were able to fire AK-47s and PKMs (machine guns) with actual rounds—who in the States gets to do that?" Moffat said.

The infantry MOSQ course is both difficult and physically demanding no matter where it is taught, and conducting the course with actual 'go to war' equipment and under hostile conditions benefited the instructors as much as the Soldiers.

"This has been the most challenging course I have worked on. We have learned many lessons that are going to benefit the Soldiers we train when we get back to California. We have identified possible pitfalls that we might otherwise have overlooked," said O'Connor.



11B Infantry Soldiers practice tactical urban movements during training at the Kabul Military Training Center May 17. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Mark Cutler)



Students of the Infantryman Military Occupational Specialty Course in Kabul move on an objective during training. (Photo by Sgt 1st Class Mark Cutler)



Purple Heart awarded for prior battle wounds

Spec. Sean Hutchins, Combined Joint Task Force-76 Knowledge Management Officer, is awarded the Purple Heart in Bagram, Afghanistan, Saturday, June 18, by C.JTF-76 Commanding General Jason Kamiya. On December 11, 2003, Hutchins was wounded in action while performing his assigned duties in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Hutchins was assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters company, 82nd Airborne Division when a furniture truck concealing an improvised explosive device exploded 100 meters inside the gates of Camp Champion in Ar Ramadi, Iraq. Hutchins was working inside the unit's Tactical Operations Center when the explosion occurred resulting in large amounts of shrapnel and debris penetrating the building and caused his injuries. As a result of such injuries, he was awarded the Purple Heart. (Photo by Sgt. Tara Teel, C.JTF-76 Public Affairs)



Soldiers drop to the ground during MOS Training near Kabul. (Photo by Sgt 1st Class Mark Cutler)

Regional Command East / Task Force Devil

In comes 492nd Civil Affairs

450th preps the new to take the helm

**Photos and story by
Sgt. 1st Class Curtis Matsushige**
Task Force Devil Public Affairs

Methar Lam -- The 492nd Civil Affairs detachment, based in Arizona, is ready to take the helm from the 450th CA detachment based in Maryland.

To prepare the team members for the transfer, outgoing 450th CA Soldiers paired with incoming Soldiers at different levels to learn the jobs they'll be taking over. As with any changeover, the new team found that there would be changes in command structure and roles at the provincial reconstruction team.

Sgt. 1st Class David Stansberry is an example, he's been the PRT's 1st Sgt. Besides dealing with the CA missions, Stansberry filed camp reports, made duty rosters, filed administrative and supply reports and dealt with ongoing and future projects.

Maj. Sam Agag was the base commander and CA commander. The incoming commander will concentrate on CA projects as will the incoming CA NCOIC.

The orientation began with something

as simple as walking the perimeter, getting their bearings and gate locations.

With their counterparts, Soldiers executed transactions like writing convoy requests, learning to pay contractors for project procedures, and project site monitoring.

The instruction went by the numbers, explaining local customs, then going on convoy to actually see what they talked about, as well as inter-service orientations with the Marines on base.

An intelligence brief of activity in the area and a map reconnaissance was given by 1st Lt. Carl Gregory of the 2nd Battalion 3rd Marine Regiment, based in Hawaii. The new teams said they were looking forward to going on

(Left) Soldiers of the incoming CA teams (left) and the outgoing CA team (right) pose during their right-seat-ride. (Below) Outgoing Civil Affairs Commander Maj. Sam Agag introduces the incoming Commander, Maj. Cynthia Duckett, to Shah Mahmood Safi, Governor of Laghman province and other elders.



(Top left) Soldiers of the 492nd Civil Affairs Detachment turn their backs to the dust flurry at the take off of a CH-47 Chinook helicopter during a village rescue mission. (Top right) Outgoing Civil Affairs team in desert BDUs introduces the incoming CA team and United States Agency for International Development civilians to a contractor. (Above) Sgt Timothy Sersig, 492nd CA Detachment, has a line of customers for his 550 cord bracelets.

recon patrol with the Marines.

Meeting local elders, contractors and government heads was an essential part of the changeover; it also put a closure to the Maryland detachment's mission and opened the way for the Arizona detachment.

Both detachments conveyed to each project site and spent hours meeting collectively as well as in specialized teams.

During their stay in Afghanistan, the 350th CA detachment saw duty in Herat until the mission was handed to the Italians. Their last two months of deployment was in Laghman Province.

The 350th CA detachment saw renovations of 16 schools, construction of numerous water wells and sanitation projects, and repaired roads. They started programs teaching Afghan farmers growth of alternative agriculture products and gave training in alternative vocations. In all projects, locals were employed and job skills promoted. They worked with the Afghan soldiers, police, government and people on a professional and personal level.

The 350th CA detachment gave the 492nd CA detachment a good idea of what lies ahead and prepared them to take the helm.



Regional Command East / Task Force Devil

The well that Fairfield built

Story and photo by Spc. Benjamin Donde
CFC-A Public Affairs

KABUL-Charity knows no borders. It can travel across miles of oceans, cut through language barriers and can even break through the differences in culture and religion.

In the small village of Aloudine in Kabul, the goodwill of two students from Fairfield University, Conn., spanned the globe to bring running water to a community that had none.

In the fall of last year, Mikaela Conley, daughter of Lt. Col. Christopher E. Conley, a Soldier serving here

with Task Force Phoenix, and her friend Aamina Awan had initiated a plan to raise money



The children of Aloudine gather around their new water hole, a well built for them as a gift from students at Fairfield University, Conn.

for a needy community in Afghanistan.

The women are members of Students for Social Justice at Fairfield University.

"My daughter contacted me about raising money for a project to help the people," said Conley. "They wanted to do something for Afghanistan."

Mikaela and Aamina raised \$3,000 through donations and rounded up 30 boxes of clothing and toys for the residents of the village.

Conley is involved in the Commander's Emergency Response Program, a source of funds for projects that can help Afghans quickly.

As an advisor to the local Afghan National Army, Conley had already been working on several other projects. He asked around about villages in need and found Aloudine.

"We would have to travel a long ways to get drinking water. It's not easy for us to find," said Mohamad Akram, the village elder. "Now we have a natural way to get pure drinking water."

Work began on a well and a pump to bring up the water.

"We are very happy with the help that we received from America," Akram said. "We like the U.S. and we want their help."

The money that the students had raised was put to use for the technical portion of the well. The people of the village helped to build it.

"As a father I am extremely proud of my daughter and the work she did," Conley said at the dedication of the well only days away from Father's Day. "My daughter Mikaela has always had empathy for people less fortunate, and I am pleased and impressed that she and her friend Aamina put this project together."

A plaque was placed on the well that reads "A gift to Afghan children from Fairfield University." It's also inscribed with a proverb: "Through peace, there are all good things."

"The devastation that has befallen Afghanistan by wars, drugs and violence is overwhelming, but it's the little things that have allowed this country to find peace," Conley said. "This country is in the process of rebuilding and it's going to happen one well at a time."

Friends unite after 35 years

UNITE from Page 6

School in the tiny town of East Brady, Pa.

About 35 years ago, Air Force Lt. Col. Tim Reichart and Marine Corps Lt. Col. Larry Stewart, parted ways as Stewart's family moved to Brookeville, about an hour away. Then early June, two men, who thought they had never met, began talking about what troops routinely talk about, where they were from.

The chance meeting happened at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. The two men were part of the



Air Force Lt. Col. Tim Reichart (left) and Marine Lt. Col. Larry Stewart stand atop Hill 3070 outside of Kabul, Afghanistan during a mission on June 19. (Photo courtesy of Reichart)

same mission. They were to be inserted by helicopter on the top of a 10,000-foot peak where an Afghan airliner crashed in February. Reichart, who is the director of operations of the joint personnel recovery agency, was going up the mountain to oversee the recovery of remains that were still on the mountain. Stewart, who is a planner with Combined Joint Task Force 76, was headed up on the mountain to examine the area for possible use as a future training site for high altitude operations.

The two gentlemen were standing on the flight line at Bagram chatting and passing time while waiting for the weather to clear up for the helicopter ride.

"[Stewart] mentioned

there a lot. And I hear, 'hey have you seen Tim Reichart around? Naw, he joined the Air Force and I joined the Marine Corps and kind of went separate

ways.' But every time I went back, somebody would ask me about him. I would hear where he was stationed, but I didn't think I would ever see him again."

Reichart still owns a home in the small town of just over a thousand people. His parents Bob and Gloria Reichart still live there. He is currently stationed at Fort Belvoir, Va.

Stewart, who is stationed out of Okinawa, Japan, has a grandmother, Dorothy Wimer, who still lives in Brady. His parents, Jude and Sharon Kendra, live nearby in Brookville.

Stewart now, however, has another reason to visit East Brady, rekindling a friendship more than a quarter-century old.

"He's given me his address now and every time we go back to [East] Brady, I'll go swimming in his pool with my kids and help him work on his house," Stewart said.

that he was from Pennsylvania," said Reichart. "He mentioned a town probably an hour away from me and I said 'wow, I live in East Brady.' He said he used to live there. I looked at his name tag and figured out who he was, but I hadn't seen him in about 35 years."

"We had been through a few briefings together but it just never clicked," said Stewart. "We went to the same church and the same school. I hear about him all the time. My whole extended family is still in [East] Brady, so I go back

360th Civil Affairs Brigade retires colors



Col. Guy Sands, 360th Civil Affairs Task Force commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Raymond Owens retire the unit's colors June 25 at Bagram Airfield. Replacing the South Carolina unit is the 321st Civil Affairs Brigade from San Antonio, Texas. During their time in Afghanistan, 360th CA opened 82 schools, provided 50,000 blankets and 10,000 single family tents during the winter, visited more than 200 villages, and their cooperative medical assistance program treated more than 28,000 people. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Robert Massey, CJTF-76 PA)

Regional Command South / Task Force Bayonet

Spin Buldak shura offers hope

Story and photo by

Sgt. 1st Class Stephen Lum

Task Force Bayonet Public Affairs

SPIN BULDAK, KANDAHAR – Close to the boarder of Pakistan stands Task Force Ares and the town of Spin Buldak, which is a survivor of more than 25 years of unrest. The district was the recipient of seven vehicles to improve the local law enforcement mission, the grand opening of a new water distribution center and a shura.

Deputy Governor Haymaoun, 205th Afghan National Army's Lt. Gen. Muslim and Chief of Police Ayoub Salalgi flew with Col. Kevin Owens, Task Force Bayonet commander, and his staff to Task Force Ares, led by Col. Greg Simon, French Special Forces.

Prior to the events in Spin Buldak, Simon and his staff briefed the visitors on their areas of concern, especially the security of Highway 4, the election process threat and the problems of the illegally armed groups.

"In the past 10 months seven incidents have occur in this southeastern Afghanistan boarder town," said Simon. "The victims were locals or drivers from other provinces traveling without Coalition or Afghan law enforcement, always leaving one survivor to testify."

Spin Buldak, one of the major roads into Pakistan, is troubled by groups with private interest, like thugs asking for protection money.

"We live better, trade and security is improving, but our border security needs keep the 10 exits to Pakistan better patrolled," said Haymaoun. "The enemy uses the border areas to rest and set up for future disruptions. We need to use the shuras to bring together and involve the tribal leaders and Mullahs on regular basis."

"Afghans must take the lead in solving Afghanistan's problems," added Owens. "The Coalition is here to help in the process, not lead."

After the briefings, Simon, Haymaoun and local officials signed documents to turn over three motorcycles to the Spin Buldak police, three to the Afghan Border Police and a car to the local government.

Following the turnover, the entourage conveyed from Task Force Ares to Spin Buldak City, where the deputy governor and Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team joined the shura delegates for the grand opening of the new water distribution system.

Haymaoun asked the attendees to come together to build peace. He told them they



Deputy Governor Haymaoun tests the waters of the Spin Buldak's new district water distribution center, a project of Task Force Ares, June 16.

were the real representatives of the country and that they should stop killing each other, and rebuild the country.

"It's your duty to select, to elect responsible, honest people," Haymaoun said.

"This is an opportunity to shape your future and your children's future by voting," said Lt. Col. Paul Moses, Kandahar PRT commander. "Tell you brothers and your sons to use the reconciliation program to turn in their weapons."

"We must get rid of the bad guys," said Simon. "Coalition forces need to work together with ANA, ANP and ABP."

"We are here to help the government, but we need assistance to protect our borders. We need to get rid of the warlords. We thank the Americans and French for their assistance," one elder said.

"Thank you to all, especially the PRTs for their plans and projects, but it was just the beginning," said another elder. "You have our full support."

Tarin Kowt PRT fits the bill in Uruzgan province

Story by Staff Sgt. Robert Massey

CJTF-76 Public Affairs

TARIN KOWT - Senior leaders from 14 countries saw first hand just how important a Provincial Reconstruction Team can be to the local people living in this remote part of central Afghanistan.

June 21, Combined Joint Task Force-76 hosted a diplomat day at Tarin Kowt in the Uruzgan province. Ambassadors from five countries and senior embassy leaders from nine others met with Lt. Col. William LaFontaine, Tarin Kowt PRT commander.

"Conditions here are set for Afghan, United Nations, international and other organizations to expand effective humanitarian and reconstruction efforts in the province," LaFontaine told the officials. "The Afghan National Army is doing an excellent job providing security for the PRT."

The Tarin Kowt PRT, part of 354th Civil Affairs Brigade, was built entirely by Afghan contractors and employs 48 local Afghan workers. It is a 10.5 acre facility complete with a 6,800 ft. runway, satellite communications, mess hall, an aid station, small gym, full maintenance facility, two wells, electric generators, and barracks for 180 people. The security element for the PRT consists of US and Coalition soldiers and Afghan Security Forces.

The visit allowed the Kabul-based diplomats to learn more about the PRT mission, said Mr. Robert Maggi, CJTF-76 political advisor.

"It allowed them to shape their thoughts on the next steps for their respective nations' activities in Afghanistan and present these ideas to their capitals," Maggi said. "They were able to see the extraordinary dedication of the PRT."

When the troops from the PRT arrived roughly seven months ago, the people in downtown Tarin Kowt refused to speak with them even threw rocks in their direction, LaFontaine said. "Now, when we go downtown we see goods and services being sold in the market place. Instead of throwing rocks, they bring IEDs to the front gate and turn them in. There is a visible, definite improvement in the way of life for these people."

In December 2004, the PRT officially began the process of rebuilding the Uruzgan province. The impact is obvious, LaFontaine said. Local farmers have new tractors, police have new vehicles and the new hospital has ambulances. Young girls can go to school now where they couldn't before.

"What we have here now is a secure center of excellence with the resources and subject matter experts; a place where these agencies can come and effectively reach out into the province to help the Afghan people," LaFontaine said. "Our PRT should serve as a role model for others in Afghanistan."

The PRT has provided training and equipment to build a road and bridge system to link remote areas in the province to Kandahar. They built and staffed schools and assisted hospitals, drilled wells, and rebuilt

the local court house. Now, with help from the Afghan government, they're helping build windmills to power irrigation wells. So far, the projects throughout the province total more than \$5.5 million. "Not only have we provided them with the vehicles, facilities and equipment but also the training, knowledge and resources necessary to maintain in the long run," LaFontaine said.

All the PRT projects are coordinated through the Uruzgan provincial governor, LaFontaine said, adding that the Afghan government is the driving force within the region.

One of the most significant developments is the construction of a highway from Tarin Kowt south to Kandahar, a project that will open doors to further the region's growth. Engineers hope to have the project complete prior to the September provincial elections, said Maggi, who advises the CJTF-76 on Afghan political issues. Coalition and Afghan troops continue to stifle insurgent activity along the new road, Maggi said. In time, the Afghan government will assume the entire reconstruction effort and security for the area.

"They are getting better everyday at funding and supporting projects in the province," Maggi said.

"Meanwhile, Coalition forces and the PRT troops are bringing signs of prosperity to the Afghan people, something the enemy cannot deliver," LaFontaine said. "You put a well in a village that's never had fresh water and you have really moved mountains in terms of winning the support of those people."

Regional Command South / Task Force Bayonet

Diablo Reach Back touches war-torn South

Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Jacob Caldwell

Combined Task Force Bayonet
Public Affairs

Kandahar – In a 20-day mission in northern Kandahar Province, Combined Task Force Bayonet forces engaged Taliban forces in some of the fiercest fighting seen this year.

Led by the 3rd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, Coalition forces kicked off the military operation known as Diablo Reach June 7 in the rugged, mountainous terrain of Shah Wali Kot district.

The Coalition forces included Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police, the Romanian Army, and U.S. forces from the 3-319th AFAR, 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, and the 173rd Airborne Brigade.

Diablo Reach Back, a follow-up mission to Diablo Reach conducted in May 2005, was designed to clear the area of anti-coalition militia so that the provincial government of Kandahar can establish a permanent presence and a good line of communication in the remote, northern district, according to Lt. Col. Bert Ges, 3-319th AFAR and Task Force Gundevil Commander.

The Shah Wali Kot district is considered to be one of the last Taliban strongholds in Kandahar province, but that may soon end as the patience of the district's residents grows thin with the anti-coalition forces.

"For the most part, the people out here are tired of the Taliban," said Ges, "Because there is no government representation out here, the Taliban come out of the hills and take their food, beat on them, harass them, and then leave."

Establishing security in the district is the first priority, said Ges, but another is to strengthen the positions of the district leadership. Once this is done, recon-

struction efforts can begin in the embattled region.

Ges wants to establish a satellite police station in Gumbad by July 1.

"Gumbad to me is very key terrain in the Gumbad valley," said Ges, "The people are supportive of us. We have had several major shuras there. We have identified a building, and we want to rent it. We are going to bring ANP forces up there. Anywhere from 20 to 40 men and then we will augment

when we leave, the Taliban can then return. So that's why in the Gumbad project we want to show that permanent presence. Get the ANP there and help them out."

Security has been a challenge in the district. This operation alone saw minor battles near the villages of Zamto Kalay and Chenartu. There was also significant enemy contact made by Delta Company, 2-504th PIR June 14 in the vicinity of Takht Kalay and June 17 in the vicinity of Gumbad.

"The men that we are fighting now have been around for awhile," said Ges, "They know how we fight, so we have to be very quick and aggressive... All of the operations that we have had during Diablo Reach

surrounding towns," said Bigelman.

"There has been a significant reduction in enemy forces," said Cpt. George Whittenburg, 3-319th AFAR Intelligence Officer, "The terrain does not lend itself to finding bodies."

The reception of Coalition forces by the residents has been varied.

"At the worst, the reception has been neutral," said Ges, "But some have been very positive. It all comes down to the leadership of the villages."

Maintaining and improving the relationships with the various village elders is essential to the success of future operations in the village.

"We don't want to come into a location or objective, clear it and then leave," said Ges, "We want clear the area and then go right into civil affairs."

"What we have been doing during this operation is bringing the District Chief and the District Police Chief with us to show them the conditions of the area and let them hear what the people are saying," said Ges, "We always end up with what is called a shura, a meeting with the village leaders."

"And then we do a village assessment. We review all of their issues and concerns and are very honest with them. We get all of the potential projects that they may want to have accomplished, then take them back to Kandahar to the province headquarters. There, they do

an assessment themselves and begin to prioritize (the projects)," said Ges.

Leading an international and inter-battalion force, in what are typically infantry missions, has been a rewarding experience for Ges, a field artillery officer.

"I'm very impressed by the paratroopers who come in hard, fight the enemy, and then, like that, they are already going into the next phase, where we are trying to help the people," said Ges, "Our paratroopers know at all times that the Afghan people are not the enemy, that the enemy small village in northern Kandahar Province.



(Top to bottom) Maj. Kevin Bigelman, Task Force Gundevil Operations Officer, meets with the elders in a small village in Shah Wali Kot District. Lt. Col. Bert Ges, Task Force Gundevil Commander, talks to the Shah Wali Kot District Police Chief (left) and the District Chief (right) with the aid of his interpreter in Gumbad. Maj. Kevin Bigelman interacts with some of the children of a small village in Shah Wali Kot District.

them with (U.S. forces), anywhere from 16 to 40 men. That is to get the infrastructure started, establish communications, and then we'll nominate a project for an actual police sub-station there."

"I've put a very aggressive timeline of 1 July for this project. I just want to get some troops up there," said Ges, "I realize they may be living out of their vehicle for the first few weeks. But I just want to get them in there, get a foothold and then expand from there. Every time we are in that village they know that we can provide security. They see the helicopters and the artillery fire. But

Back have had ANA soldiers with them. They are the main effort. We have substantial forces here also, but they do the bulk of the fighting."

Specifically involved in this operation were ANA soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade and ANA soldiers from Weapons Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade, according to Maj. Kevin Bigelman, 3-319th AFAR Operations Officer.

"The ANA did a great job. They were well equipped, well led, and they did exactly what they were tasked to do, which was to clear the objective area and the

What's Happening / News You Can Use

R&R leave news and special promotions

Stuff you need to know to go

* To be eligible for R&R you must be an active duty component projected to be in theater for 12 months. Reserve components must be mobilized for one year and projected to be in the AOR for 270 days or more.

* Eligibility for travel beings after serving 60 days in the AOR and travel must be initiated prior to completion of the 10th month.

* R&R Leave is 15 days of chargeable leave. Leave begins the day after you arrive at your destination. The time CANNOT be combined or extended with any other absences.

* Participation in the R&R Leave Program does not preclude personnel from participating in the R&R Pass Program or Emergency Leave. R&R Leave in conjunction with TDY is possible but requires OSD approval.

* Transportation is fully funded by the Department of Defense to the airport closest to the leave destination. The destination does NOT have to be the home of record. The

hub airports are Atlanta (ATL) or Dallas/Fort Worth (DFW).

* All personnel must ride on designated R&R Leave aircraft to Kuwait. Personnel are NOT authorized to fly by any other means or to any other location. Also, personnel who have been approved through OSD for R&R in conjunction with TDY will also travel through Kuwait. All commercial ticketing is done in Kuwait – NO exceptions.

* Once your DA31 is approved by O-5 or above command channels, no change to the leave destination is authorized unless a new leave form is completed and approved.

* Seat allocations are posted on the Lion Net by the 20th of each month for the following month to allow for planning. For example, 20 April posting will reflect dates for May. Personnel should check with their Task Force S1 to verify manifest information and roll call/departure times.

* Bagram and Kandahar Airfields are the

identified departure points.

* Personnel are REQUIRED to have a DCS Brief prior to departure; DCS statement is required on DA31, block 17.

* Travelers to CONUS will travel in clean, serviceable DCUs. Travelers OCONUS will change into civilian clothes upon arrival to Germany.

* Civilian clothes are REQUIRED for OCONUS travel. NO weapons or 'battle rattle' will be taken. Military personnel must report in uniform.

* The authorized baggage for both departure out of and arrival back in theater is one 50-pound checked bag and one 15-pound carry-on bag.

* If circumstances delay the return to duty, contact your unit Personnel Assistance Point at your return gateway.

* R&R travelers must report back to their designated gateway on the date and time stamped on their leave form by the Personnel Assistance Point when they arrived at the gateway.

Go sing it on the mountain

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Guests must provide their DA31 Leave Form upon check in.

Program is available only to service members on R&R leave from a 12 month assignment to a country in CENTCOM AOR which is in direct support of OIF or OEF. Service members who have just immediately completed a 12 month tour may also participate while their unit is on block leave

Reservations: Reserve Online

To book a special R&R package you must fill out the R&R reservation form Online or call the Vacation Planning Office. The R&R reservation form is not a confirmation of your reservation. All requests will be processed within three business days.

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Free Stuff! The Patriot will feature a web site per issue which offers free stuff for service members.

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Please call room reservations at 1-800-367-6027 (CONUS).

Eligible personnel must mention that they are part of the U.S. OEF/OIF on R&R leave program (within 60 days of return). A copy of deployment and leave orders indicating R&R leave are required at the time of check in.

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Anheuser-Busch salutes heroes with free admission

For the third time since the first Persian Gulf War, Anheuser-Busch is offering free theme park admission to members of the U.S. Armed Forces and their families through a program called "Heroes Salute".

The program is offered at Busch Gardens theme parks in Williamsburg, Va., and Tampa Bay, Fla., and at Sea World in Orlando, Fla., San Antonio, TX, and San Diego, CA.

The program began in February and will run through the end of December 2005.

The program is open to active duty, reserve, and National Guard service members and their families.

To gain free admission under the program, service members need only register either by visiting the Hero Salute website at: www.herosalute.com

and filling out applicable registration information, or by submitting the information in the entrance plaza of participating parks and showing a Department of Defense photo ID card. Up to three direct dependents of military members also are entitled to free admission.

Dependents may take advantage of the offer WITHOUT their service member sponsor; however, an adult must accompany minor dependents.

Busch Gardens Williamsburg and Sea World San Antonio opened for the 2005 season in March. Those interested in visiting Sesame Place should check the operating schedule because the park does not open until May. Sea World Orlando, Busch Gardens Tampa Bay, and Sea World San Diego are open year-round.